THE GEM OF THE REFORMATION

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The Gem of the Reformation

1529—1929

A Jubilee Booklet Commemorating

The Four-Hundredth Anniversary

of the First Publication of

The Small Catechism

of

DR. MARTIN LUTHER

WM. H. LUKE

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Dr. Martin Luther.

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A JUBILEE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

The year 1929 marks a jubilee for the Lutheran Church throughout the world. Pastors and teachers are working hard to make this an anniversary year which shall be remembered a long time. Fathers and mothers, too, have special interests in this anniversary. But the anniversary is by no means for the grown-ups only. In fact, the jubilee is especially for the children. Boys and girls have every reason to share in this anniversary. Though separated by great distances in many lands, speaking languages which we cannot understand, reading and writing letters and signs which have no meaning to us, thousands, yes, millions of boys and girls are joining in the celebration. From Alaska to Argentina, Greenland, Iceland, and the British Isles, from Norway to South Africa, from Siberia to India and China, yes, in sunny Australia and in the South Sea Islands, boys and girls are taking part in the jubilee. There are white children of many nationalities, black and brown ones, yellow and red ones, but all of them are happy on account of the same anniversary. Wherever the Lutheran Church is preaching the Gospel, the schoolchildren are joining their fathers and mothers, their pastors and teachers, in the commemoration of the four-hundredth anniversary of "the greatest book ever written next to the Bible" — Dr. Martin Luther's SMALL CATECHISM.

DREARY SCHOOL-DAYS.

Perhaps many of the boys and girls who join in this jubilee have poor schools and few text-books. Some of them may have no blackboards, and some may be sitting on the ground and writing in the sand. Yet, when they have the Small Catechism, their school-days are brighter than those of Martin Luther. Soon after he was born in Eisleben, Germany, on November 10, 1483, his poor father moved to Mansfeld. There Martin went to school for eight years. He learned the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, but these were not explained to him. He had to learn many other things which were not in the Bible; and when he left this school to go to the high school in Magdeburg, he did not know the way to heaven. Many of the teachers of his day knew little more than their pupils. One man wanted to become a priest though he had not opened a book for six years. When another priest was asked whether he knew the Ten Commandments, he said, "I have not seen that book." When Luther was older, he often wished that other children would have better schools than he had had. After a visitation of different churches he wrote in his introduction to the Small Catechism: "What misery I beheld! The common people know nothing at all of Christian doctrine and many pastors are quite unfit to teach."

THE REFORMATION.

In 1503 or 1504, when Luther was a student at the University of Erfurt, he for the first time found a complete Bible. From it he gradually learned the true meaning

Luther Finding the Bible.

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of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer which he had learned by rote in boyhood. Still quite a number of years passed before he fully knew the truth. He had been taught that Jesus is a stern Judge, to whom the sinner cannot come directly. Therefore he, like others, prayed to many saints. But his conscience troubled him. Even when he became a monk, he found no rest. The more he worked and the more he prayed to the saints, the greater seemed his sins. At last, when he had almost died in despair, he learned that by His suffering and death, Jesus had paid for the sins of the world and that, believing in Him, he had the forgiveness of sins. This great truth he preached and taught when he was professor at the University of Wittenberg. On October 31, 1517, he nailed his famous Ninety-five Theses to the church-door. Then followed the exciting days of the Reformation, which stirred the world. In April, 1521, before the great meeting at Worms, he said: "Except I be convinced by clear passages of Scripture, I cannot and will not take back a single word. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen." And God helped him. Luther was hidden by his friends in the Wartburg. There he began to translate the Bible into the German language. The New Testament was published in 1522. How eagerly the people now read the Bible! Many old people learned to read in order to learn the way to heaven from the printed page. They found that many things which had been taught them were not in the Bible, and many truths of the Bible had never been taught them.

A BRIGHTER DAY FOR THE CHILDREN.

Luther continued his great work of teaching, preaching, writing, and translating also the Old Testament, but he did not forget the children. He knew that if things were to be different, the change would have to begin with the children. He asked his friends to write a little catechism for the children. Some of his friends tried it, but the one man to write the best catechism was Luther himself. For thirteen years he had frequently preached on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. When he preached, he tried to speak so plainly that the common people and the children could understand him. Often in the evenings he had himself instructed the children in Wittenberg, though he had many other duties to perform. When he returned from his visitation of many churches close to the end of the year 1528, he could wait no longer. The terrible conditions which he found, caused him to begin writing his book for the children and young people. Though he was sick and had much work, — for he was writing his Large Catechism, the anniversary of which is also observed in 1929, — he brightened the school-days of millions of boys and girls with his "Children's Bible," the Small Catechism.

THE GEM OF THE REFORMATION.

The first parts of the Small Catechism were published in January, 1529. They were printed on large cards, or charts, to be hung on the walls in homes and schools, so that the children could easily learn the Ten Command-

Luther Translating the Bible.

ments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, which were printed on these first charts. The remaining parts were published in March. In May these parts were also published in book form. But even before this they had been translated into Low German and published. Like the Ninety-five Theses the Small Catechism was eagerly read and quickly translated into many languages. There seem to have been three High German editions by June 13 of the same year. Luther himself worked on a new edition in 1531, and he made some improvements until 1542. One of Luther's friends said: "If Dr. Luther had done no more than to restore the Catechism to the home, school, and pulpit, all the world could not sufficiently thank or repay him for it." And a great modern writer has truly called it "the Gem of the Reformation." Children who learn Luther's Small Catechism learn to know Jesus as their Savior, not as the "stern Judge." From the Ten Commandments they learn what is sin and that they need a Savior. In the Creed they find the Savior. Can they learn anything more beautiful than the explanation of the Second Article? In the Lord's Prayer they learn how to go to the Savior in the prayer which He Himself has given them. In the Fourth Chief Part they learn how they have been placed in the Savior's arms in infancy through Holy Baptism. In the Fifth Chief Part they learn to confess their sins to their forgiving Savior. And in the Sixth Chief Part they learn how this Savior forgives sins and strengthens the faith of His disciples with His own body and blood. In short, in simple, yet beautiful language they learn the way to heaven.

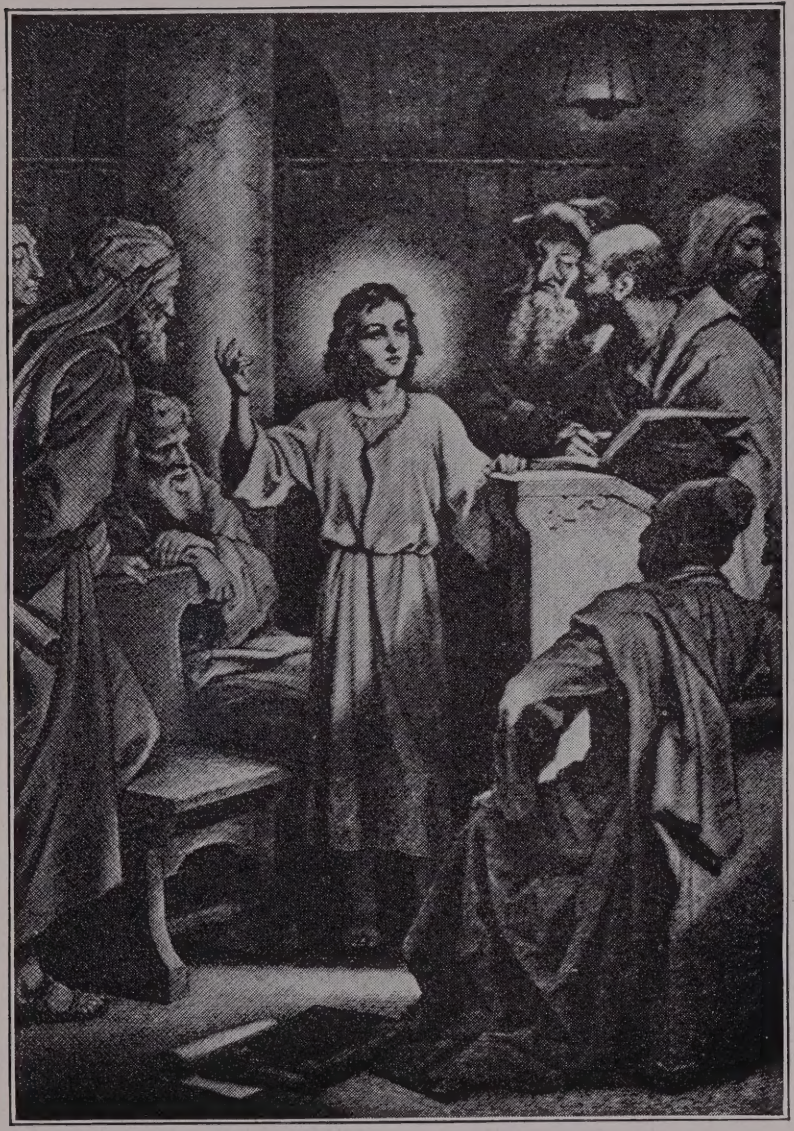
The Luther Family.

TO MANY LANDS IN MANY TONGUES.

Before Luther died, on February 18, 1546, the Small Catechism had been translated into many languages and brought to many lands. We cannot here name them all, but before the end of the century, parents and children in Bohemia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, England, Finland, and France were reciting Luther's Small Catechism. When the Dutch people came to New York in 1623, some Lutherans among them brought it to America. When many Lutheran Swedes came to Delaware in 1638, they brought the Catechism with them. Campanius, one of their pastors, translated it into one of the languages of the American Indians. Thus it was the *first* book in an American language, though it was not published until 1696, after the Bible had been published in the language of the Indians. When the founders of the Missouri Synod left Germany in 1838, they had regular instruction in Luther's Small Catechism during their long voyage. When they came to St. Louis, they simply continued this instruction. They erected and maintained schools where the chief text-book, next to the Bible, was Luther's Small Catechism. God has blessed and prospered the faithful instruction in the Small Catechism in the past. Through its influence the thousands and millions of boys and girls in many parts of the world can now join in the celebration of a great anniversary. But what will these boys and girls do with this precious heirloom?

DON'T GIVE UP THE GEM.

Does it not seem strange that such a great anniversary should be celebrated for such a little book, which can be read from beginning to end in an hour and which thousands of children have learned by heart before they were nine years old? "The Catechism is only a small book, which may be purchased for six pennies, but six thousand worlds cannot outweigh it in value," said one of Luther's friends. One of his enemies said: "Blessed are the hands that wrote this book, and blessed are the eyes that read it." Luther himself said: "We should love the Catechism and esteem it precious and teach it diligently to our young people; for in it is comprised the right, old, true, pure divine doctrine of the ancient Christian Church; and whatever is opposed to that must be regarded as false doctrine and error, no matter how long it may have been taught, how good it may appear, or how highly it may be prized." At another time Luther said: "Though I am a doctor, I must daily, or whenever I have time, pray the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and other parts of the Catechism word for word." The boys and girls who follow the example of Luther will not give up this precious heirloom, but will gladly hear and learn it, so that, when they are older, they may pass on to their children "the Gem of the Reformation." Let us all follow Luther's example, committing the Six Chief Parts, as given on the following pages, to memory and "praying them daily or whenever we have time." Then Luther's Catechism will become OUR CATECHISM.



"Gladly Hear and Learn It."

THE SIX CHIEF PARTS.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS,

As the Head of the Family Should Teach Them in All Simplicity to His Household.

The First Commandment.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

The Second Commandment.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD, thy God, in vain.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

The Third Commandment.

Thou shalt sanctify the holy-day.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment.

Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may not despise our parents and masters nor provoke them to anger, but give them honor, serve and obey them, and hold them in love and esteem.

The Fifth Commandment.

Thou shalt not kill.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

The Sixth Commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed and each love and honor his spouse.

The Seventh Commandment.

Thou shalt not steal.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may not take our neighbor's money or goods nor get them by false ware or dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and business.

The Eighth Commandment.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, nor defame our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.

The Ninth Commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

What does this mean? Answer:

We should fear and love God that we may not craftily seek to get our neighbor's inheritance or house nor obtain it by a show of right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

The Tenth Commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

What does this mean? Answer:

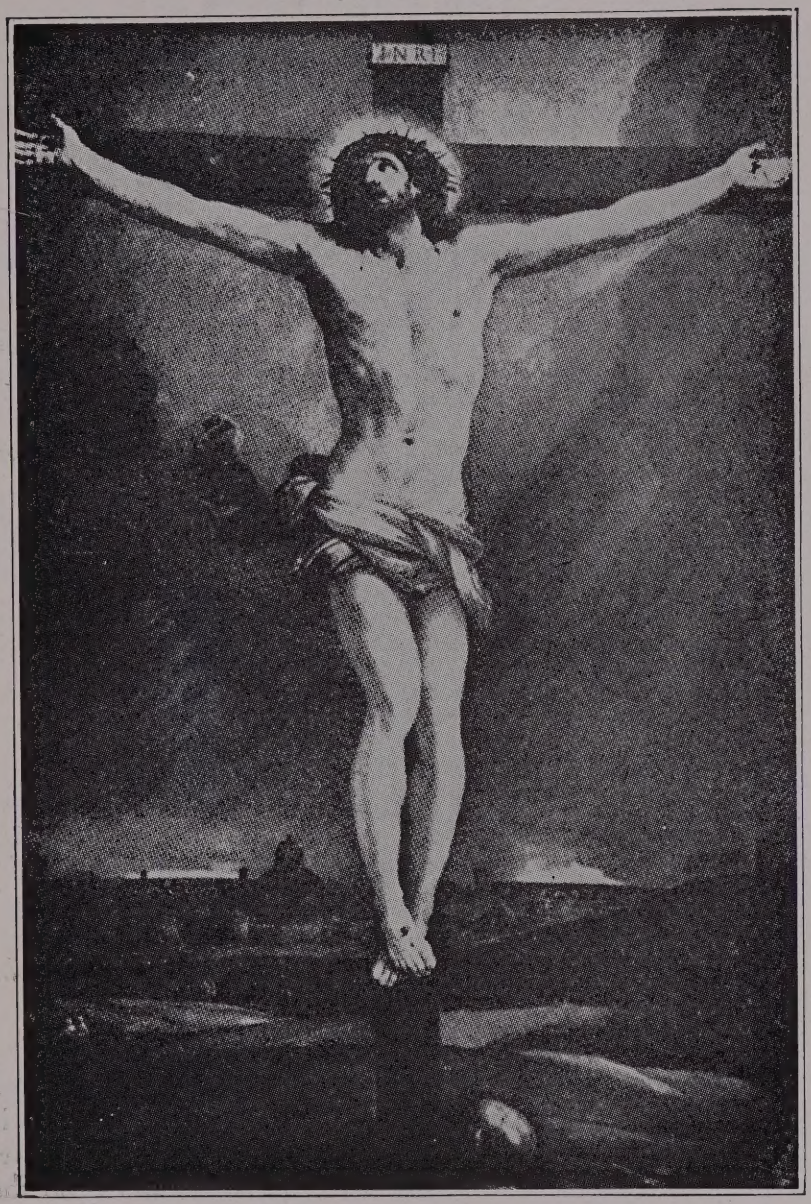
We should fear and love God that we may not estrange, force, or entice away from our neighbor his wife, servants, or cattle, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

What does God say of all these commandments? Answer:

He says thus: I the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

What does this mean? Answer:

God threatens to punish all that transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear His wrath and not act contrary to them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all that keep these commandments. Therefore we should also love and trust in Him and willingly do according to His commandments.



"My Lord, Who Has Redeemed Me."

THE CREED,

As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in All Simplicity to His Household.

The First Article.

OF CREATION.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? Answer:

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; also clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

The Second Article.

OF REDEMPTION.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

What does this mean? Answer:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me, from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that

I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

The Third Article.

OF SANCTIFICATION.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? Answer:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith: in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers and will at the Last Day raise up me and all the dead and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

"Ask Him as Dear Children Ask Their Dear Father."

THE LORD'S PRAYER,

As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in All Simplicity to His Household.

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean? Answer:

God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

The First Petition.

Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean? Answer:

God's name is indeed holy in itself; but we pray in this petition that it may be holy among us also.

How is this done? Answer:

When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we as the children of God also lead a holy life according to it. This grant us, dear Father in heaven. But he that teaches and lives otherwise than God's Word teaches, profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father.

The Second Petition.

Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean? Answer:

The kingdom of God comes indeed without our prayer, of itself; but we pray in this petition that it may come unto us also.

How is this done? Answer:

When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life, here in time and hereafter in eternity.

The Third Petition.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean? Answer:

The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is this done? Answer:

When God breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow God's name nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh; but strengthens and preserves us steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end. This is His gracious and good will.

The Fourth Petition.

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? Answer:

God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What, then, is meant by daily bread? Answer:

Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

The Fifth Petition.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? Answer:

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither

have we deserved them; but that He would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. So will we also heartily forgive and readily do good to those who sin against us.

The Sixth Petition.

And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? Answer:

God indeed tempts no one; but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice; and though we be assailed by them, that still we may finally overcome and obtain the victory.

The Seventh Petition.

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? Answer:

We pray in this petition, as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honor, and finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven.

Amen.

What does this mean? Answer:

That I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and heard; for He Himself has commanded us so to pray and has promised to hear us. Amen, Amen, that is, yea, yea, it shall be so.

"Heirs According to the Hope of Eternal Life."

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM,

As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in All Simplicity to His Household.

FIRST.

What is Baptism? Answer:

Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's word.

Which is that word of God? Answer:

Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew: *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*

SECONDLY.

What does Baptism give or profit? Answer:

It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are such words and promises of God? Answer:

Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

THIRDLY.

How can water do such great things? Answer:

It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter third: *By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior; that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.*

FOURTHLY.

What does such baptizing with water signify? Answer:

It signifies that the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written? Answer:

St. Paul says, Romans, chapter sixth: *We are buried with Christ by baptism into death; that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

"Our Sins are Forgiven by God in Heaven."

THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS,

As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in All Simplicity to His Household.

What is the Office of the Keys? Answer:

It is the peculiar church power which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners unto them, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written? Answer:

Thus writes the holy Evangelist John, chapter twentieth: *The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

What do you believe according to these words? Answer:

I believe that, when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and, again, when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend, this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself.

How the Unlearned Should be Taught to Confess.

What is Confession? Answer:

Confession embraces two parts: one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the confessor,* as from God Himself, and in no wise doubt, but firmly believe, that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

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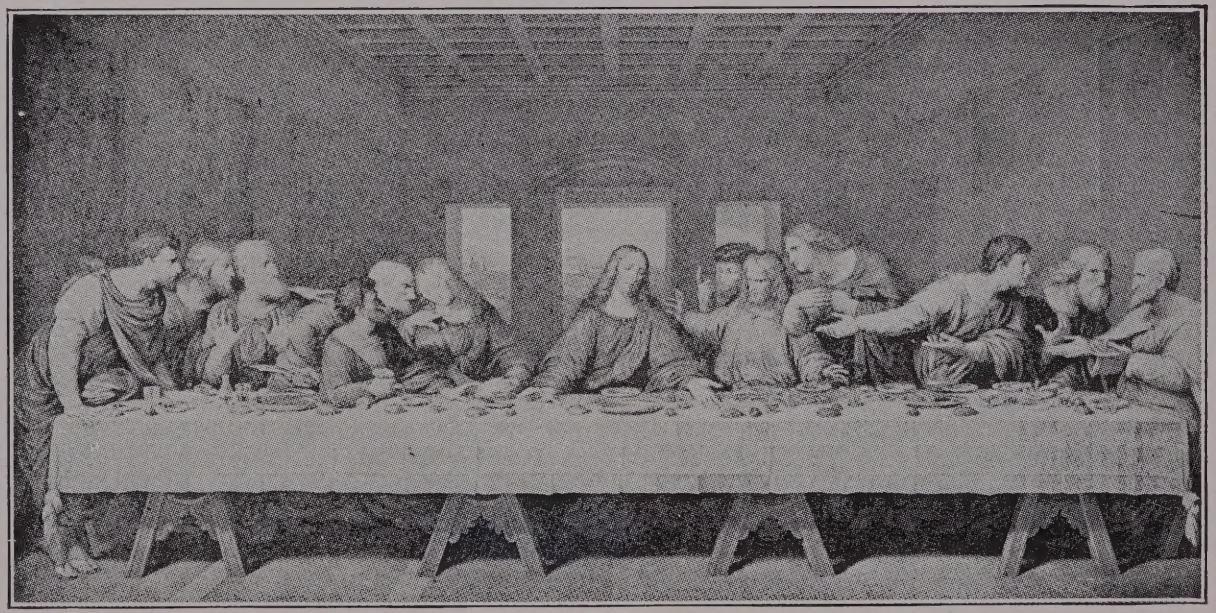
* or pastor.

What sins should we confess? Answer:

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even of those which we do not know, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the confessor we should confess those sins only which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these? Answer:

Here consider your station according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, slothful; whether you have grieved any person by word or deed; whether you have stolen, neglected or wasted aught, or done other injury.



"For You!"

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR,

As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in All Simplicity to His Household.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar? Answer:

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself.

Where is it written? Answer:

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write thus:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it and gave it to His disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.

After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Take, drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? Answer:

That is shown us by these words, *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins;* namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? Answer:

It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words here written, *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins;* which words, beside the bodily eating and drinking, are as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words, *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.* But he that does not believe these words or doubts, is unworthy and unprepared; for the words *For you* require all hearts to believe.

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